

Israel Shlifer



The photo of me was taken during an interview in June 2003.

I still do some consulting at the Military Academy and write articles and books. I cannot live without work. For this reason I didn't emigrate to Israel or the USA where I have many relatives. For many years I was not allowed to travel abroad due to my knowledge of state secrets. I did know many developments of weapons. Finally in 1996, when our human resource manager was on vacation, the director of my institute signed my permit to travel abroad. He had known me for many years and was sure that I was not going to share any secrets. I traveled to Israel. I liked it there, but I understood that I could only live in my country where I was born and had lived a long life.

I have a twofold attitude to perestroika that changed the life of the country and its people dramatically. It's not that I worry about the material part of life. I still work and can earn money and I receive a sufficient scientific pension, but I feel sorry for other old people that have to lead a miserable life after they had worked for 40 years or more. I am glad that perestroika opened up opportunities for the development of national cultures, including the Jewish one, the so-called minority culture. I am also glad about democratic principles coming into our life and that the iron curtain collapsed and people have got an opportunity to see the world. However, I still feel sorry for the downfall of the Soviet Union. I loved the integral country. I have many friends all over the country [the former Soviet Union]. Now there are borders and customs between us. I cannot jump on a train to go to the Baltic Republics. I need a visa and a foreign passport... I cannot accept this.

Now that independent Ukraine gave a real opportunity for the development of the Jewish cultural life I began to participate in it. I am an active member of Bnai Brith I take every effort to make this organization a real hearth of Jewish culture. I celebrate Jewish holidays, go to Seder at the synagogue and read Jewish newspapers. Besides, I collect Jewish folk music and study Jewish traditions from tapes. This is all very interesting, but I've never concentrated on purely national attitudes. I have many Russian and Ukrainian friends. They are active in science and culture. I believe I am a citizen of the Universe and I value every human being regardless of their national origin.